



City of Fairfax

**10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-3630**

September 18, 2014

Letters to the Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th St NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Editor,

We would like to set the record straight on the two key issues raised in a recent Washington Post article ("Residents say they didn't have enough voice in Fairfax City's \$30m land deal." Monday, Sept. 15, 2014) regarding the city's decision to sell its water utility as part of a larger effort to secure long term water rate reduction for city residents.

First, the city sought to be transparent, upfront and open with our residents with regard to the complex legal issues, the prospect of contracting with Fairfax Water as our future water supplier, and the planned sale of the city's water assets in Loudoun County (which included a large reservoir, water treatment plant, and two dams, one of which had recently been labeled 'high hazard' by the state). The city engaged in an unprecedented communications effort with our residents and the media. The city sent direct mail to each residence and business in the city not once, but three times. The Mayor met with representatives of all local media at City Hall on a Sunday afternoon to ensure early communications would be clear and thorough.

The city carefully prepared an answer to each of the many questions received about the water issue and dedicated a special area of its web site for the FAQ's, which reside there to this day. In the FAQ's there were multiple references to the sale of the Loudoun County property with specific mention of the \$30m price under consideration. Further, there were several references to the scheduled City Council agenda items, including a public hearing, regarding the sale of the Loudoun assets in the November and December 2013 Cityscene and, following the approval of the sale, another Cityscene message was printed in the January 2014 Cityscene. Further, the city's web site contained each future City Council



agenda where the Loudoun Water sale was a topic which included the staff report and the accompanying complete sale agreement. The city was very clear in its multiple public messages that the sale of the Loudoun County property was part of the city's calculus in transitioning to lowered water rates.

Second, the city carefully considered the valuations of the Loudoun County properties prepared by its experts as part of its due diligence. In every case, the city was advised that the \$30m offer from Loudoun Water was good, fair, and reasonable. In fact, the city was told that it would be avoiding the immediate investment of millions of dollars in repairs and upgrades many of which would still be needed if the city opted to hold onto the property for speculation. The city was unwilling to speculate with public assets due to a host of future unknowns. It was clear that the best value to city residents was a sale to a buyer who intended continued use as a water storage and treatment facility. To have risked the loss of a fair offer to gamble on future value, given the cost and risk exposure in holding the property, the extensive challenges required for its redevelopment and the many unquantified unknowns, would have been poor judgment.

Each of us, as members of the city's 2012-2014 City Council; remain fully supportive of the results of the carefully deliberated transactions with Fairfax Water and Loudoun Water. It was an exceedingly complex set of issues and the city diligently and repeatedly informed its residents, as we tried to do on all issues. We regret that a few residents felt uninformed; however, the city did its part to ensure the public had access to all information.

Sincerely,

Scott Silverthorne, Mayor, 2012 to present
and
City Councilmembers 2012-14

Michael J. DeMarco (*and current*)
Daniel F. Drummond
Jeffrey C. Greenfield (*and current*)
David L. Meyer (*and current*)
Eleanor D. Schmidt (*and current*)
Steven C. Stombres